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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Housekeepers' Chat

Thurs. Oct. 20/27.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Casserole Dishes."

ANNOUNCEMENT: Many appetizing dishes may be cooked en casserole. Aunt Sammy suggests a number of food combinations which are delicious, baked together, and served as the main dish. Menu and recipe from the U. S. Bureau of Home Economics. Bulletin available: Farmers' bulletin 1195, "Rice as Food." Contains recipes for using rice in various ways, from soups to desserts.

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Many homekeepers, who cook three meals a day, include casserole dishes in their schedule, quite often. For who doesn't like an appetizing casserole meal? A savory combination of two, or three, or four foods-- meat and vegetables perhaps -- well seasoned, baked to just the correct degree of tenderness, and golden brown-ness, and brought to the table piping hot, ready to be served from the baking dish. The practical housewife knows she can make many delicious meals, with casserole dishes as the base, and she also knows that casserole cooking saves time, and dish-washing.

Strictly speaking, a casserole is a covered baking dish, of earthenware or glass, or of enameled ware or aluminum. I found some very neat-looking casseroles last week, made of glass, with nickel frames. More expensive ones could be had with silver frames. These metal frames make the hot casserole easier to handle when serving, but the frame should never be put into the oven.

I was particularly pleased with a quart-and-a-half size casserole, without a frame, which sold for a dollar. This baking dish was made of vitrified earthenware, brown on the outside, and white on the inside. Other casseroles, of glass, with nickel frames, were priced at a dollar and a half.

If one uses an earthenware or glass baking dish, on top of the stove, with direct heat, an asbestos mat should be slipped under the dish.

A friend told me recently that she always "tempers" earthenware and glass dishes, by pouring moderately hot water over them, before putting in hot food, or subjecting them to intense heat. Otherwise, the glaze, or the dish itself, is likely to crack.

To strengthen a new earthenware baking dish, before it has been put into the oven at all, place it in a kettle large enough so that the baking dish won't touch the sides. Place the baking dish on a rack, or a muffin ring. Cover completely with cold water. Set the kettle over the fire, bring the water to the boiling point, and let it boil slowly for five minutes. Then take the kettle from the fire, and let the baking dish cool in the water. Heat the dish slowly, the first time you use it. After that it will be "seasoned."

R-H. C. 10/20/27.

Last year I broadcast a number of recipes for dishes to cook en casserole. One of the most popular recipes was for pork chops, potatoes, and apples, which were cooked together in a casserole, or in a roaster with a tight fitting cover. Another was for Chicken en Casserole. Do you remember that one? It was a recipe for cooking the surplus cockerels, or tough old fowls which have to have a special method of cooking, in order to make them tender. The chicken is cut into pieces convenient for serving, dusted with flour, salt, and pepper, browned in fat, and then placed in the baking dish, and baked for about two hours. Just before serving, the chicken is removed from the casserole, so a gravy can be made. Then, the meat is replaced in the gravy, in the casserole, and placed on the table.

My radio friends were so fond of this recipe, that it was broadcast twice. Another good casserole dish is Flank Steak seasoned with salt and pepper, spread with stuffing, browned in a little hot fat, and placed in a casserole, with water or stock, and baked until tender. Still another popular casserole combination is Rabbit, with Vegetables.

Before I broadcast today's casserole dinner, there are a few questions to be answered.

First question: "How should wool blankets be washed at home?" Wool blankets as well as other woolens, should be washed in an abundance of lukewarm suds. Use soap in the form of a solution, or a jelly, and do not rub it directly on the blanket. Squeeze and work the blankets in the suds. Hand washing is less likely than machine washing to shrink woolens, and make them lose their softness. Squeeze the blankets from the last suds, and rinse free from soap, in several changes of lukewarm water. Be sure the rinse water is lukewarm; cold water will cause shrinkage. Wring the blankets through a loosely set wringer, and dry in a warm place, but not near a fire, nor in direct sunlight. Never allow woolen blankets to freeze. Place them over a line, with a half or a fourth on one side. Squeeze the ends occasionally, to remove the excess water. When the blankets are dry, raise the nap by brushing well with a clean, stiff whisk broom. As I have said before, the warmth of a blanket depends very largely upon the amount of nap.

Question Number Two is from a woman who wants to know whether pillows can be washed satisfactorily, with the feathers in them. They can. To wash pillows, without removing the feathers, scrub them in a weak washing soda solution, using a good suds. Repeat in a second suds, if necessary. Rinse in lukewarm water, changing it two or three times. Squeeze out as much water as possible, and dry the pillows on a sheet, in a warm place, preferably in the sun. Beat the pillows, from time to time, while they're drying.

Question Number Three: "How and when should clothes be sprinkled?" Sprinkl the clothes evenly and thoroughly, with warm water. Pull the garments into shape, fold them, and roll. Cover snugly with a clean cloth, and allow to stand for at least half an hour, so that the dampness will become more evenly distributed. A round whisk broom makes a good sprinkler. So does a spray head, attached to a cork, fitted into a bottle. Both the whisk broom and the spray head give a finer spray, sprinkle more evenly, and do the work in less time than the hand method.

Only one more question, and it's about eggplant: "Is it necessary to salt eggplant, and put a heavy weight on it, to draw out the juice before cooking?"

R-H. C. 10/20/27.

No, it is not necessary to salt eggplant and draw out the juice before cooking. Some eggplant is slightly astringent, but letting it stand in salt doesn't remove the pucker, anyway. Eggplant may be sliced, pared, dipped in batter, and fried at once.

There is a casserole dish in today's dinner menu -- a casserole dish of rice, cheese, and tomatoes, called "Italian Baked Rice." The entire menu includes Italian Baked Rice; Fried Eggplant; String Beans; and Pear Sauce with Ginger Cookie

Perhaps I should explain that most of the recipes I broadcast are based on proportions for five persons. However, this Italian Baked Rice recipe makes ten average servings. Six ingredients, for Italian Baked Rice:

4 cups cooked rice.
3/4 cup grated cheese.
1/2 cup chopped pimiento.
1 1/2 cups tomato juice.
2 teaspoons salt, and
1/8 teaspoon pepper.

Six ingredients. I'll read them again: (Repeat).

Mix the ingredients well together, and pour into a baking dish. Cover the top of the dish with the pulp left from straining the tomatoes. Bake for 30 minutes in a moderate oven and serve hot. This dish will make ten average servings.

The whole menu, again: Italian Baked Rice, Fried Eggplant; String Beans; and Pear Sauce with Ginger Cookies.

Tomorrow, I shall give you a special dinner suggestion for Sunday, and a number of simple desserts for children.

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